

News Officials Oppose Any Links of Correspondents to the C.I.A.

By MARTIN ARNOLD

Many of the major news gathering organizations say that they would discharge immediately any correspondent who was also found to be working for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Their stands were made known following the recent disclosure that the C.I.A. had about three dozen American newsmen working abroad on its payroll as undercover informants or as full-time intelligence agents who use journalism as their cover.

In addition, over the years, the agency has attempted to recruit newsmen working in the United States to supply it with domestic intelligence.

Interviews with news officials indicated that the idea that newsmen would work for any government agency, including the C.I.A., was profoundly disturbing for news-gathering organizations for it raised the question of the credibility of the news that such an agent-journalist would file.

Opposition by the A.P.

Keith Fuller, vice president and assistant general manager of the Associated Press said, "We would not permit it for one moment. We don't want our people working for any government agency, under any circumstances."

The Associated Press has nearly 800 full-time employees working overseas, and nearly 850 "stringers" — journalists who usually work for themselves and sell news articles, one at a time, to news organizations.

Most foreign news that appears in American newspapers and is reported on radio and television here is supplied by either The Associated Press or the United Press International, which has about 600 full-time employees overseas. Both organizations said that they would immediately dismiss any correspondent found to be working also for the C.I.A.

"I'm satisfied that none of our people are involved with the C.I.A.," said H. L. Stevenson, U.P.I. managing editor. "And our Washington manager is satisfied that we are clear. We would very promptly discharge anyone who was involved."

In response to queries, the C.I.A. has assured The New York Times, where dismissal would be immediate, and Time magazine and The Washington Star-News, among others, that their correspondents were not connected with the agency.

But Fred Taylor, managing editor of The Wall Street Journal, said that the agency would not admit it if it had a valuable agent who was also a newsmen.

"A reporter has to be objective, and can't serve two masters," Mr. Taylor said. "So far we're taking on good faith that our people are not involved. But it's risky in organizations which have a lot of people overseas. Sooner or later, an agent-journalist would be discovered, however." At The Wall Street Journal such a newsmen would be dismissed immediately.

William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, has indicated that full-time staff correspondents working for general circulation news-gathering organizations will be phased out of C.I.A. work, but that about 30 others—mostly agents who work abroad as free-lance writers and stringers—will continue to be maintained.

Malcolm W. Browne, a New York Times foreign correspondent, said that when he was working for U.P.I. in Saigon there were a number of foreign correspondents he believed were working at least, in part, for the agency.

The problem of correspondents working for the agency is also somewhat confused by the very nature of the correspondent's business. That is, in the gathering of news, it is an acceptable journalistic practice to have contacts within the agency.

"There's hardly a career correspondent who doesn't have his C.I.A. contacts, and it's a two-way street sometimes — the correspondent and the agency simply must exchange information," Mr. Browne said, "Just as a correspondent must exchange information sometimes with an Ambassador."

A spot check of five New York Times correspondents recently showed that two of them said that they did not believe that they had come in contact with any agent-journalists during their work, while three were pretty well convinced that they had, although both reported they lacked proof.

One Times correspondent, Juan de Onis, said that when he worked in Latin America and South America there "were some [American journalists] who seemed to have developed unusually close relations, which have served the agency in putting out its line."

Communist Role Hinted

He said that he felt the agency tried to use correspondents to maintain the news

that is, to write articles reflecting the desires of the agency.

During the revolution in the Dominican Republic in 1965, Mr. de Onis and this reporter were approached by an agent of the C.I.A. who had with him a large pile of documents.

The documents were purported by the agent to have been stolen by the agency from the headquarters of what the United States Government called the Communist party in the Dominican Republic, and they showed that the Dominican Republic, and they showed that the Dominican revolution was being conducted on orders from Communists in Europe. This was the Johnson Administration's contention.

Mr. De Onis, an expert on Latin American affairs, declined to write such an article because, he said, there was no way to determine whether or not the documents were authentic.

Perhaps even touchier is the subject of domestic newspapermen working for the agency, which is proscribed by law from intelligence operations within the United States.

Several years ago, for instance, a New York Times reporter who worked in New York City visited the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., to get information for an article he was preparing. During the interviews he was told by C.I.A. personnel a great deal about the inner workings of The Times — information that had not previously been published elsewhere.

And some years before that a reporter for a large and influential newspaper in the Middle West was approached by the business agent for a local labor unit.

The business agent told him, in strict confidence, that he also worked for the C.I.A., that as a union official he attended a great number of international labor meetings in Latin America and that he reported back on those meetings to the agency.

The official then asked the reporter, who covered labor news, if he would be willing to prepare similar reports for the agency about "labor doings in the Middle West." For this service, the reporter recalled, he was assured that periodically the agency would deposit money, not great amounts, in the reporter's bank account. The reporter turned down the offer, but tried unsuccessfully to determine whether or not the agency had actually